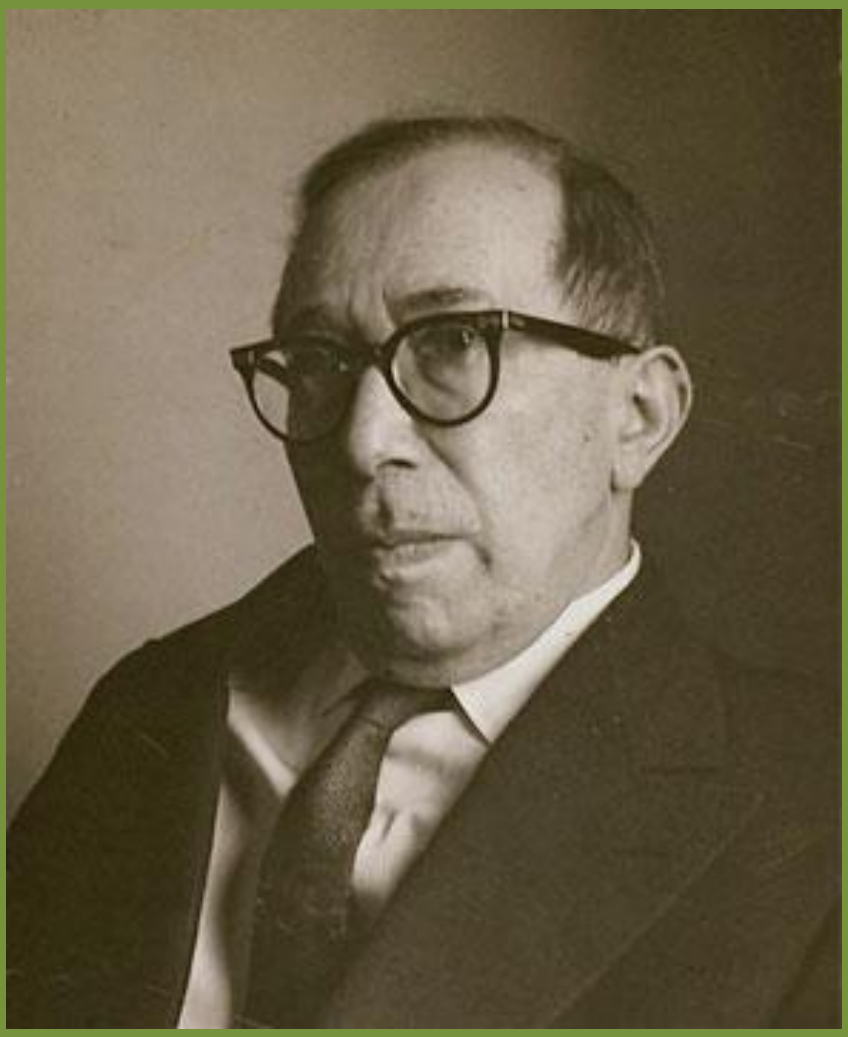

LEO STRAUSS

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO 1961

According to the ordinary textbook view, the distinction between nature and convention is an invention of the so-called Sophists. This I think is simply wrong. What does this really mean? There are certain individuals, mostly non-Athenians, perhaps all non-Athenians, who came to Athens especially in Socrates' lifetime and taught teachings which were generally regarded as undesirable, as subversive, and the distinction between nature and convention played a considerable role in that teaching. The ordinary objection to the Sophists was a very crude one. They taught for pay, and a gentleman doesn't teach for pay. This is a very gentlemanly view, but surely not one which would befit a professor. Therefore the Sophists have found many defenders in our age. One can perhaps say it was just a prejudice against the Sophists, this way of earning their living. The philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, did not base their objection to the Sophists on this ground, because it would easily have given rise to the question, what are your sources of income. Well, Plato happened to be a wealthy man, but Socrates was notoriously poor, and apparently he had no visible means of support. One has to study Xenophon's treatise, or dialogue rather, Oeconomicus, management of the household, where this question of Socrates' invisible means of support is delicately discussed. It seems that Socrates had wealthy friends, and the things of a friend are common according to a Greek proverb. That seems to have solved the problem. But that was not the serious issue. The serious issue was that the Sophists were regarded by Plato, by Socrates and Plato, as a kind of prostitutes, people prostituting philosophy or wisdom. One could say that the Sophists in the Platonic-Aristotelian meaning are akin to what is now called an intellectual. The term intellectual is now strictly value-free, it is a descriptive term. But it is a difficult term to define for purely descriptive purposes because in contradistinction to such things as physicians and other professions, it is impossible to distinguish the genuine article from the fake. You know a genuine physician can be distinguished frequently from the fake physician. But it is impossible to speak of a fake intellectual. The distinction doesn't apply here. You can distinguish between a fake physicist and a genuine physicist, a fake scholar and a genuine scholar, but not intellectual. That shows there is a certain grave difficulty here, and this difficulty was in a way anticipated in the Platonic-Aristotelian-Socratic view of the Sophist as a sham wise man. They surely were very intelligent, very bright, very clever men, but something apparently was fundamentally wrong. To establish that is by no means easy. But we have the best clue to this phenomenon today by starting from the phenomenon the intellectual. I don't believe that is very helpful if we take up the subject, the political doctrines of the Sophists. Generally speaking one can say the Sophists were conventionalists, ie., asserted that all right is conventional. But this view was not however a preserve of the Sophists. Quite a few philosophers held the same view. I don't believe it is very helpful to go into that question.

Now I would like to add one more point, and then we open our discussion. The most important premise of classical political philosophy is the notion of nature with the implied distinction from convention. But there is also another condition of classical political philosophy which we must at least mention. Political philosophy was preceded not only by philosophy, but also by what would be called in a literal translation political science, politike episteme. But political science doesn't mean there what it means now. Political science means there the skill, the art, the knowledge, the understanding by virtue of which a man is able to manage the affairs of the city well by deed and by speech. One could perhaps say that the Sophists are characterized

(Lecture 16, 27 November 1961)

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On December 4th you will undergo a written examination in this room and you are supposed to bring a clean book with you, one that has nothing in it, and no books or notes from this course, and there will be in order to protect your virtue against any dangers, there will be a proctor here who will enforce this rule. I am sure this will not be necessary, but it is a kind of reminder that in the extreme case, force will be applied. I will be here to dictate the question, and will be willing to explain the question, if an explanation is needed, within limits. I mean I will not supply an answer to the question in the form of an explanation. You will also have to have a pencil or a pen, in addition to paper. 3:30 to 5:00, in case you want to make an appointment afterward.

Now before I continue, there are two questions. Mr. ___ is still unclear about Aristotle's conceptions of human perfectibility. "Does Aristotle's observation that the power of acting at will leaves no defense against evil impulses present in all of us mean that because of innate human flaws or men's mere humanness we can never become or be perfectly good? Is the idea of the good man and hence the good society a goal toward which all men should aim and a few men may approximate but which no man can ever truly reach...where absolute freedom is allowed, there is nothing to restrain the evil which is inherent in every man." Well, Aristotle of course admitted the possibility of good men, and if any further proof were needed, it would be supplied by the chapter in the Ethics, toward the end of the Fourth Book, where he speaks of a sense of shame as a desirable quality in immature human beings, that means not only young people who are immature, but also old people who are immature. A mature man, that is the implication, would do nothing wrong. Hence, there would be nothing to be ashamed of. And for this reason a sense of shame is not a virtue, it is only something (behind ?) virtue and vice, because it is a corrective of vice. So Aristotle admits the man. Now what does this statement mean, the evil impulse is present in all of us? Of course they are, and what kind of things are going on in our subconscious, as some man has called it, is supposed to be common knowledge today. That is clear. All kinds of fantastic things are desired by any one of us under certain conditions, for example in dreams. Now if the social order is of such a kind as to encourage these kind of things, encourage all lawless desires, and if there are special opportunities to indulge them, for example, excessive wealth, very great power, no good. Aristotle is sure that a truly good man would resist all temptations, but you cannot count that all powerholders will be perfectly good men. Any political science, any legislative science, has to reckon with that. I see no difficulty in that. To say that man is capable of being good, virtuous, and yet such men are very rare under all conditions and are particularly rare in a society which does not have effective restraints on lawless desires. I see no difficulty there.

Q: I wonder if the habitually good man still has a residual problem of evil.

A: No, the truly good man, no, he would have them habitually under control. But let us assume that certain very wicked people put some pills into his drink, pills which dope him, so that he does no longer know what he does, so that he is no longer responsible. They might conceivably come out. That would not be fantastic. Things like that do happen. You read of these things even in the daily papers. Aristotle has no doubt. Plato would say that strictly speaking no man is good because no man is wise, and for Plato goodness and wisdom are identical. Aristotle doesn't say that, but I will take up these two points later on.

Now, the statement by Mr. ___. "Aristotle describes the hierarchy of ends according to the nature of the most complete and best man, who is a wise man. Why is the wise man more naturally complete than a man characterized by a different virtue such as prudence or courage? Is not the possession of wisdom a particular virtue which completes the nature of the wise man, just as prudence completes the prudent man?" That is a perfectly sensible question, but Aristotle assumes, you can say—I will take up this problem later today—that the perfection of the highest in man is the highest virtue. Now if the highest in man is the mind, and the mind is most truly mind in its theoretical capacity, then theoretical wisdom is superior to prudence. In prudence we deal essentially with the contingent things, the things which come into being and perish, and from our point of view even what is good for me, the circumstances in which I am here now. Wisdom deals with what is always, the sempeternal or eternal. Aristotle had reasoned that out. Whether his reasoning is good enough, that is another matter, but it is not a mere dogmatic assertion. And as for courage in particular, there is an argument as to that in the Third Book of the Ethics. Aristotle begins his enumeration of the virtues with courage, and that means in the context that courage is the lowest of the virtues. That doesn't mean it is not indispensable, but it is the lowest because it is much more—I will give you only an indication of that. When Aristotle speaks of courage he has to make a distinction between five forms of courage. Courage is complicated; there is a certain form of courage which any thug has, and that is not exactly the right thing. And there are less of these spurious forms in the case of the other virtues as appears from Aristotle's...in the other cases. Courage is from Aristotle's point of view the lowest of the virtues. By the way Plato says the same thing in the First Book of the Laws. This does not mean that it is not necessary and indispensable, but it is so to speak the least intellectual of the virtues. Second question. "If only the wise man is complete, because wisdom in contrast to the other virtues," that is not Aristotle's view, "is Aristotle's view of the best man...in conflict with the other virtues?" Not in principle.

Let us then turn to the conclusion of my argument last time. I have been speaking of Aristotle's presentation and critique of the first political philosophy, at least of the man who according to Aristotle's notion of political philosophy would be the first political philosopher, namely Hippodamus...the neglect to consider the political things in their peculiar character. He applies a cosmological formula to the political things. A modern equivalent would be the people in the nineteenth century and some in our century who said evolution is the key to the analysis of political phenomena. In a way also psychoanalysis today, although psychoanalysis is of course not a cosmological but only a psychological formula, and some people say we do not understand political things unless we view them in the light of psychoanalysis. That would be also a parallel. Aristotle speaks in this context, very properly, because Hippodamus has not considered it, of the specific character of laws and makes here a rather surprising statement. The laws owe their power entirely to custom or habituation, and this is the radical difference between laws and the arts. The arts owe their validity to their reasonableness. If a physician makes a new discovery, the claim of this discovery to acceptance is based entirely on its reasonableness, nothing else. And if it is based on something else, say on the power of that physician in the medical hierarchy, then it is very dubious from the medical point of view. But the case of laws is different, according to Aristotle. As he says here, the laws owe their

power entirely to custom and not to their intrinsic reasonableness. Now if one elaborates this point, one reaches this conclusion, that the political community, the polis, is essentially recalcitrant to reason. It needs sheer force in addition to persuasion. This is a very strange assertion of Aristotle because he is the same man who said that the law is the dictate of reason, that the rule of law means the rule of reason, as distinguished from the rule of men, which means the rule of reason qualified by passion.

I would like to re-state the difficulty. In the critique of Hippodamus, it seems that the arts are superior to the laws. The arts are of higher rationality. But precisely Aristotle's critique of Hippodamus implies that the arts must be controlled by law. The key point which Aristotle makes there, Hippodamus recommends the encouragement of invention, ie., of what the arts are by nature inclined to do, to progress. Aristotle says no, this unqualified invention is politically and socially harmful and it must be controlled by the laws. Hence the arts must be subordinate to the law, whereas the first part of the argument seemed to suggest that the laws are superior to art.

Now let us discuss this point. Laws are the work of the legislative art, but the legislative art is the highest form of practical wisdom or prudence, namely the prudence concerned with the common good of a political society, as distinguished from prudence in the primary sense which is concerned with a man's own good. These things are developed by Aristotle in Book Six of the Ethics especially. The difference between art and law, between the intellectual activities proper and law and social institutions, is founded on the difference between art and prudence, and this we have to discuss now.

Prudence is of higher dignity than the arts because every art is concerned with a partial good, whereas prudence is concerned with the whole human good, the good life. Prudence alone enables one to distinguish between genuine arts and sham arts. The arts do not do it, but prudence does. A genuine art like medicine, a sham art like cosmetics. And prudence alone enables one to discern which use of an art is good. For example, take the art of strategy. But not every use of the art of strategy, every technically correct use of the art of strategy, is good. That is no longer decided by strategy, by the general as general, but by the civilian authorities, as we would say, and that means by prudence as distinguished from the mere art. The arts point, as it were, to right or to law, which makes them genuine arts by being their limit and norm. This is the obvious message of the famous choral song in Sophocles' Antigone, many (awful ?) things there are, but the most (awful) is man, and the poet gives a description of the various arts which man has invented in order to lead up to this. It can be a very great thing but it can be a very dangerous thing, because the arts can both be well-used and misused. And what good use, in contradistinction to bad use is, is determined no longer by the arts but by justice or by right, or, which is the same thing, by prudence. The artisan is concerned with producing the work peculiar to his art, the cobbler with making shoes, the physician with restoring health. But as such he is not concerned with his own good. The cobbler is not concerned with his own good in making shoes. He is concerned with his own good in so far as he is concerned with receiving pay for his work, or with practicing the art of money-making, an art which accompanies all arts, because every artisan accepts reward for what he does. That at first glance, the art of money-making, would appear to be the universal art or the art of arts. The art of money-making knows no limits. It enables a man to make greater and ever greater

gain. Yet the view that cleverness in money-making is an art presupposes that unlimited acquisitiveness is good for man, and this presupposition can very well be questioned. It appears, according to Aristotle's analysis, that acquisition is for the sake of the use of wealth, for the sake of good use of wealth, and this acquisitive activity is necessarily regulated by prudence. Even if there can be an art of money-making, and in the loose sense of the word it surely can be, this itself must be regulated by a higher form of reason, which again is not an art but prudence.

The distinction between prudence and art implies that there is no art that tells one which partial good supplied by an art I ought to choose here and now in preference to other particular goods. The artisans may be perfect in supplying us with the products of their different arts, but no art can tell us which product I should acquire or buy now in preference to others. That is the implication of this distinction. There is no expert who can decide the prudent man's vital questions for him as well as he can. This is one massive difference between Aristotle and certain trends in present-day social science, according to which view it is possible to replace prudence ultimately by an art, by an expert. You have today for example an expert in marrying, marriage counselors, people who in a way claim to be better able to tell a man who he should marry than he could himself. The notion of prudence implies that the prudent man alone can settle his vital questions. Not every man, there are people who are well served by having expert advice. You see, the expert advice can never be final. A medical expert would tell you you must undergo an operation, and if you do not undergo it you will die. That would seem to be identical with a command. But it is not. You can still say what you prefer. The decision is your decision. No one therefore can be compelled to undergo an operation if he does not think it is necessary for him. The physician says it is necessary if you want to survive. But the sick man can still say it is better not to live than to have perhaps an extreme incapacitation. It might even conceivably be the cost of the operation. To be prudent means to lead a good life, and to lead a good life means that one deserves to be one's own master or that one makes one's own decisions well.

The notion of prudence is incompatible with the notion of universal expertise. Prudence is that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from moral virtue, that is to say, goodness of character or of the habit of choosing, just as moral virtue is inseparable from prudence. Aristotle makes a distinction between prudence and cleverness or smartness. Smartness or cleverness is not prudence. Smartness or cleverness is the ability to find means for any ends, whether the end or the means are decent or indecent doesn't make any difference, that is smartness, and that is not prudence. Prudence is constituted by the co-presence in the same individual of decency, and vice versa. You cannot be morally good if you are not prudent. Otherwise you have good intentions, but that doesn't make you a good man. You must also choose properly, here and now. It is not enough to have a general desire for acting well if you do not choose well here and now. The arts as arts do not have this close relation to moral virtue. In other words, you can be an artisan without having any moral virtue to speak of. You can be a scientist without any moral virtue to speak of. Aristotle goes so far, in the Politics, as to suggest that the virtue required of artisans as artisans is less than the one required of slaves, because a slave lives with you in your house. If he is to be a good slave, he must be, if I may say so, house-broken, he must have quite a few moral qualities. But the artisan,

who lives elsewhere, and with whom you have to do only when you enter his shop over the counter, he can be an habitual drunkard and what else, provided he just has enough self-control to be good while producing, and preferably also while exchanging, because there are also possibilities of deception there. But here you don't have to worry too much because these things are somehow guaranteed by legislation and so on. Prudence and moral virtue united, and as it were fused, enable a man to lead a good life or a noble life, which seems to be the natural end of man.

The best life is the life devoted to understanding or contemplation, as distinguished from the practical or political life. Therefore practical wisdom is lower in rank than theoretical wisdom, which is concerned with the divine things, as Aristotle puts it, or the cosmos, and subservient to it, but in such a way that within its sphere, the sphere of all human things as such, prudence is supreme. The sphere ruled by prudence is closed to the principles of prudence, namely the ends in the light of which prudence guides men are known independently of theoretical science. We know by nature the ends of man, we don't need a science for that. Because Aristotle held that art is inferior to prudence, that prudence is inferior to theoretical wisdom, and that theoretical wisdom is available, he could found political science as an independent discipline among a number of disciplines, in such a way, however, that political science preserves the perspective of the citizen or the statesman, and is not dependent on theoretical science. Political science, the science of human things, is an independent discipline because its first principles do not need a higher science for their establishment. Is this point clear? If we look today at political science and social science as ordinarily conceived, political science is essentially dependent on other sciences preceding political science, as people say, logically. For example, political science deals with a certain kind of human actions, political actions. But there is a general science of human action that is called psychology. And therefore psychology precedes political science logically and political science is based on psychology. Aristotle asserts fundamentally the independence of political science, because the highest principles of political science are not established, or are not necessarily established, by a preceding science.

Q: How are they established? Are they simply induced from experience, from a higher kind of experience?

A: Let us look at it this way. You know the sharp distinction which has become powerful since the times of German idealism between the a priori and the empirical, is not noticeable when one reads Aristotle's Ethics and Politics.

Q: They are empirical, aren't they?

A: They are empirical, but on the other hand the old objection of Kant, for example, against empirical knowledge, that it can only lead to provisionally knowledge. And experience can show you only that things have been such and such hitherto. It cannot tell you anything about the necessity, hence about the future. But this argument makes no impression on Aristotle, and one would have to understand that.

Q: Well, he says in the Ethics that one can't expect anything beyond a certain degree of precision, but I noticed in the Politics he refers to political science as specifically a science.

A: I know that, but you must not push this too hard. The word science is used by Aristotle frequently synonymously with art. In other words, the sharp distinction made in Book Six does not apply everywhere to his own usage. But nevertheless there is something in what you say. Although your argument was not good, the point you made was good. There is a different degree of "scientificality" about the Politics than about the Ethics. I will begin to take this up later, because that was only a provisional statement which I think is of some importance. For that is what Aristotle at first glance says and in a way what he always means, but not unqualifiedly, as I will say. Yes?

Q: In what sense is the Politics, or for that matter the Ethics, independent of theoretical science in so far as both of them have as their ground already an investigative nature?

A: When I began this course with an assertion which I repeated until the point of boring you, the connection between Aristotle and common sense, I had this in mind. Surely certain things, certain points, theoretical points which occur in his other works, in his Physics, Metaphysics, etc., are referred to here and there in the Ethics, but they are rather marginal. You can understand the main argument without it. The first point is this, one very common-sensical thing which Aristotle makes use of practically all the time. He makes a certain assertion, for example, he enumerates these and these virtues, not deduced from any principle. The six regimes, you will recall, he deduces from a principle. There is a schema, one, few, all, good and bad. And you get six and only six, necessarily. But in the case of the virtues it is different. What is the thought behind it? I would follow the principle of uncontested experience, a principle on which we act all the time. Every child in school would say that a child is either a boy or a girl. He or she may not have the slightest notion of what the bisexuality of man means, that it is connected with the procreation of human beings and so on, but that he knows, and we act on that all the time, and that is ultimately when you look at any very interesting development anywhere in science, you will see that an uncontested experience is suddenly confronted with an exception, and the question is is this exception important enough to abandon the previously established categories or can it find its place among them. So uncontested experience supplies us with universals which we need, and Aristotle would say that if someone finds fault with his list of virtues, he would say is this not a virtue, for example, urbanity, is it not a virtue, and then if he is a very brutish and boorish fellow, he would say no, one should tell everyone on all occasions what one thinks of them. And then one would perhaps need some education, some moral education, perhaps first some crude examples where he finds that he gets into trouble with this kind of boorishness, which might make him think for a moment, and later on he will see it is not only imprudent but it is even not nice, not decent. Then he will know that urbanity is a virtue. And in other cases our example would say this and this is a virtue, for example, beneficence. It is not a virtue in Aristotle. And you must argue it out. Did Aristotle perhaps include it somewhere, and if one cannot find it included anywhere, you have to look up all passages where Aristotle speaks of beneficence casually and see if you do not get an argument indirectly proving beneficence is not a virtue. That, by the way, was I think Aristotle's opinion.

Q: Could it not be argued that Aristotle's list might have been otherwise?

A: As a distinguished lawyer says, we must...quite often. Prior to investigation it is possible that Aristotle empirically picked up some of the virtues,

without considering completeness. In a way that was Kant's objection to Aristotle's doctrine of categories, he says he picked them up, rhapsodically, instead of deducing them. And all people who have gone through that German idealistic school, and that means today everyone, even the positivists, are of course shocked by the unprincipled character of argument in Aristotle and even in Plato, because the empirical and the so-called a priori are not distinguished in any way. That is the peculiarly "common-sensical" character of classical thought.

Q: Inaudible

A: The good man, in the practically and politically important sense, is the gentleman, not the wise man.

Q: What is the relationship of Aristotelian common-sense to Aristotelian wisdom and also the idea of prudence?

A: Common sense is of course an un-Aristotelian term, ie., the term common sense occurs in Aristotle's psychology but has an entirely different meaning. It has nothing to do with what we now call common sense. What we call common sense apparently emerged in the eighteenth century in our sense going back to Cicero, as far as I know. I have not investigated that. And it is indeed originally some minor modification of what Aristotle meant by prudence, ie., common sense is a common moral sense or something like that. Then we have disposed of one half of your question. What is the relation of common sense and wisdom? Wisdom has to do with the unchangeable, in modern language, for example, laws, universal laws, would be such an example. Prudence has to do always with this individual here and now. To show the connection in the simplest sense, in the case of the man of wisdom, the man of wisdom is concerned with theory, with contemplation. But this same man is of course Mr. Miller, or whatever his name may be, living, say, in Detroit, born then and then, married or unmarried, and so on. Ie., he is in addition also a human being who has other preoccupations, professions other than theoretical wisdom. But in his case all the other qualities would be in the service of theoretical wisdom. He must reflect, how can I get the maximum of leisure for research? These reflections about how to get the maximum of leisure, that belongs to the sphere of prudence, because that changes from man to man, from situation to situation. For example, if he is a professor at Stanford, and has an opportunity to become a professor at Berkeley, for example, that is a purely prudential question. But the question concerning the relation of liberal democracy to communism as such is a theoretical question. That is a provisional statement. Does it make sense? And prudence in the primary sense is the individual's concern with his good life, but there is also a prudence which has to do with the good life of society, and that is called statesmanship. Statesmanship is a modification of prudence. And Aristotelian political science is not statesmanship, but it is meant for the guidance of statesmen. It is not meant for theoretical use, for understanding for its own sake.

Q: Would statesmanship or political science use the word techne?

A: That is a great question. I will come to that later. For the time being I will leave it at this tripartition, otherwise my argument will not become clear. Techne, the arts, all of them; prudence which implies...statesmanship; and theoretical wisdom, meaning all the sciences as sciences. Whether one can leave

it at that or not, that is a question which I will discuss in the sequel.

Q: Isn't the notion of human excellence dependent upon a theoretical understanding of physics, or that everything works for an end—

A: Not according to Aristotle. The Aristotelian statements, when you read the beginning of the Ethics, we know everyone agrees as to what the end of man is, happiness. Sure there are differences, some people say that happiness consists in having the maximum of sensual pleasure, and others think happiness consists in glory and honor, and others say happiness consists in decency. Others say in theoretical wisdom. And then Aristotle argues that out without much theoretical wisdom involved in that, on what gentlemen admit. A gentleman wouldn't say we live for the sake of filling our belly, and he would not say merely for the sake of glory and honor, because he knows that in many cases it is much more decent to be one in rank, as a soldier or whatever it may be, and in no way distinguished, and to be simply a good citizen, than to be of high standing. He would say justice, good citizenship in the highest sense, that is the most important thing. One more and then we go on.

Q: I have always felt that the ancient writings on the soul were helpful for political science, and I don't think you disagree with that.

A: Which do you mean by that? Give an example.

Q: De Anima.

A: Which particular passage do you think is very helpful for political science?

Q: Book III, on the intellect.

A: I own I don't see that. If you had said the parts on psychology dealing with the passions are very important for political science, I would have said yes. Therefore Aristotle dealt with the passions in his Rhetoric.

Q: How about where he says that reason follows inclination in De Anima?

A: You mean the relation between inclination and reason? But how far is this of direct importance to political science, and even to ethics?

Q: It seems to me that the whole notion of natural virtue being prior to prudence depends on the fact—

A: But what is the teaching of the Ethics regarding that? First, you must be habituated. And until you truly understand it is do or don't, or a good child doesn't do that. Why a good child doesn't do that he doesn't know. Gradually when he becomes older he will see that. I know that there are some links, of course, even a very important hidden link, between the practical, moral, political writings of Aristotle, and the theoretical writings, but primarily the practical and political writings stand on their own feet.

Q: Isn't it a critical link the question of whether or not reason in itself is obligatory in practical reason? And Aristotle says it's not.

A: What do you mean obligatory?

Q: That knowledge of things good will immediately, necessarily—

A: I believe I will take up the issue which you have in mind. But on the surface it is simply this, as Aristotle says, prudence consists in knowing how and when and toward whom to do or not to do. For example, to give money, to whom and when and how much you should give, that is determined by prudence. Ie., you have to know all the circumstances to have a right decision, a practical right decision. But there are certain things where the question simply doesn't arise. For example, when to steal and from whom and under what circumstances, because you mustn't steal under any circumstances. That's all the Ethics says about it. That is enough for practical purposes. That it doesn't solve all questions Aristotle knew, but that is marginal, but not unimportant, for these reasons, if it is practically marginal.

Now let me continue. According to Aristotle it is moral virtue which supplies the sound principles of actions. The just and noble ends as actually desired. Ie., moral virtue doesn't merely tell you that, say, temperance is good. It makes you desire temperance, to desire to live temperately. These ends come to sight only to the morally good man. Prudence seeks the means for these ends. The morally good man is the properly bred man, the well-bred man. Aristotle's political science is addressed only to such men. Aristotle refuses to teach crooks how to be successful crooks. He speaks to gentlemen how they can be most gentlemanly in the greatest variety of circumstances. The sphere of prudence is then closed by principles which are fully evident only to gentlemen. In seeking for higher principles, ie., you see the circularity of the argument. A gentleman is what gentlemen believe to be a gentleman. And therefore one could say this is theoretically unsatisfactory. I want to deduce gentlemanship, virtues, from a higher principle. Now in seeking for higher principles, one would raise the question why should one be decent. That is a simple question of principle, but in doing so one has already ceased to be a gentleman. A gentleman is defined by this circularity. Decency is meant to be choiceworthy for its own sake, and therefore the question why gentlemanship or why moral virtue cannot be raised. Aristotle is very true to the phenomena. A gentleman is recognized as gentleman, however, not only by other gentlemen, but also by people of deficient breeding. Yet among the latter there may be men of great power of persuasion who question the goodness of moral virtue, in other words, who say why should I be decent, who have the indecency to raise this question. It is therefore not sufficient to know what justice, magnanimity, and the other virtues are, and to be moved by the beauty of these virtues. One must show that they are good. That is the crux of the Ethics. One must then transcend the sphere of prudence or of what one may call the moral consciousness. The only thinker of the great thinkers who has drawn all the conclusions of the absoluteness of the moral consciousness was Kant. But Kant had for this purpose to write his Critique of Pure Reason, ie., to show the essential limitations of all theoretical knowledge, before he could make this statement. One must show that the practice of moral virtue is the end of man by nature, ie., that man is inclined toward the practice of moral virtue by nature. This doesn't require that man know by nature, ie., without any effort on his part, the natural end. The natural end of man, as well as of any other natural being, becomes genuinely known by theoretical science. This appears then by the science of the natures, of which the nature of man is one. More precisely, knowledge of the virtues derives from knowledge of the human soul. Each part of the soul has its specific perfection. Now Plato sketches such a purely theoretical account of the virtues, especially in the Republic. The soul is divided into three parts, reason,

spiritedness, desire. There is a virtue of reason, a virtue of spiritedness, a virtue of desire, and then you need also a fourth one to bind them together, and make them one virtue. That is what Plato does, a deduction. Aristotle does nothing of the sort. Yes?

Q: I was just trying to figure out how this differs from what I asked.

A: I said more than once, that what I said in the first part of the argument is only half of it. I may not have expressed it in my reply to you clearly, but I said it at least twice. The question is surely legitimate, but you must also understand the power of this first part of the argument. Aristotle does not even attempt to give such an account of the virtues. He describes all the moral virtues as they are known to morally virtuous men without trying to deduce them from a higher principle. Generally speaking we may say that he leaves it at the fact that a given habit is regarded as praiseworthy without investigating why this is so. One may say that Aristotle remains within the limits of an unwritten law, an unwritten nomos, which is recognized by well-bred people everywhere. This unwritten law may be in agreement with reason, but is not as such dictated by reason. It constitutes a sphere of the human or political things by being its limit or its ceiling. If Aristotle had proceeded differently he would have made political or practical science simply dependent on theoretical science, and that precisely he did not wish to do. Now in order to grasp Aristotle's teaching, one must start from the fact that according to him the highest end of man by nature is theoretical understanding or philosophy, and that this perfection does not require moral virtue as moral virtue, meaning the just and noble deeds as choiceworthy for their own sake—that is morality. In other words, Aristotle makes it perfectly clear that you cannot think if you do not have control over your passions, but the control over the passions is from this point of view mere means, without merit in itself. Nietzsche in a way completely misunderstood Aristotle and Plato and came in a round about way through his own difficulties to an understanding of this point. He said that for the philosopher a certain asceticism, a certain abstention, is not meritorious, but has the same dignity, the same character, as a similar abstention on the part of a jockey. He wants to win a race, and he knows that if he wants to win it he must be very careful in dieting. In other words, it is nothing to boast of, nothing resplendent. It goes without saying that man's highest end cannot be achieved without actions resembling moral actions proper. But the actions in question are intended by the philosopher as mere means to this end. That end also calls for prudence, for the philosopher must deliberate about how he can secure the conditions for his philosophizing. The moral virtues are more directly related to man's second natural end, his social life, or political life. One could therefore think that the moral virtues are intelligible as being essentially in the service of the city. The city cannot be properly if people are not courageous, temperate, just, and so on, in other words, the utilitarian justification arises.

I hope you understood the first point. Something like the moral virtues are needed for the theoretical perfection of man, but they are not needed as moral virtues. For instance, magnanimity is praiseworthy because the city needs men who are born to command and who know that they are born to command. According to some report, Field Marshal Montgomery is the most famous contemporary example of this virtue. But it suffices to read Aristotle's description of magnanimity in order to see that the full phenomenon of magnanimity cannot be understood

in that way, from this utilitarian point of view. What Aristotle ascribes to the various virtues is a splendor which cannot be accounted for by the utilitarian doctrine. The moral virtues cannot be understood as being for the sake of the city, since the city must be understood for the sake of the practice of moral virtue. And the argument can be beautifully supported by proving that if you turn it around you are Machiavellian. The indirect proof of the soundness of Aristotle's view is Machiavelli, because that is exactly what Machiavelli said; the moral virtues are understandable only as means for the city, and all the terrible consequences of Machiavelli follow them. If the moral virtues are means for the ends of the city, it is by no means certain that they are always means. There will be always interesting marginal cases, and especially at one point. What about a condition in which the city is in peril, or it doesn't exist, it has to be founded. There the moral virtues would not apply. The moral virtues come into play only after the city has been established, after the world has been made safe for moral virtue, but before it has been made safe, anything will do. That is Machiavelli's, and I think an absolutely legitimate, conclusion. Aristotle saw that, and therefore in this suggests, as Plato did, that the city is for the sake of virtue, Aristotle more clearly than Plato, as we will see in the sequel. Moral virtue is then not intelligible as a means for the only two natural ends which could be thought to be the ends of moral virtue, the intellectual life and the social life. Therefore it seems moral virtue must be regarded as an absolute, an absolute in a precise sense as something which cannot be reduced to anything else. Yet one cannot disregard the relations of moral virtues to those two natural ends, namely wisdom and the polis. Moral virtue shows that the city—and that is the key point, moral virtue, which cannot be understood as mere means of the polis, because the polis must be understood as in the service of moral virtue—moral virtue shows that the city points beyond itself, because the city is for the sake of—
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...activity is only in the service of noble use of leisure. But the gentleman's leisurely use of activity hardly goes beyond the enjoyment of poetry, listening, or culture, or however it may be. In other words, that cannot possibly be the end of man. Aristotle is the founder of political science for this precise reason, because he is the discovered of moral virtue. This simple fact cannot be emphasized too strongly. The term moral virtue occurs for the first time in Aristotle. Plato doesn't have the term. Of course, after the term had come into being, it is easy to recognize something like moral virtue all over the world, but the precise meaning which it has it has only in Aristotle. For Plato what Aristotle calls moral virtue is a kind of half-way house between what Plato calls political or vulgar virtue and genuine virtue. Political or vulgar virtue is in the service of bodily well-being, say of self-preservation or peace. Genuine virtue is the same as philosophy for Plato. As for the Stoics, who are frequently mentioned in this context—you know this is a post-Aristotelian school, the Stoa, emerging more or less contemporaneously with the Epicurean school. The Stoic and Epicurean school were the most characteristic schools of the Hellenistic and Roman period. Now some people say that an entirely new type of political thought started with the Stoics, for example the brothers Carlyle, in their six volume history of Western thought. I cannot go into that. The Stoics went so far as to assert that only the noble is good, ie., only the moral, we could almost say, is good. Yet they defined the man of nobility with the wise man, and the wise man must as such possess the "virtues"

of logic and physics. In other words, that is much closer to Plato than to Kant. We must beware of mistaking Aristotle's man of moral virtue, or good man who is a perfect gentleman, for the good man in an ordinary sense, and that would be a man who is just and temperate, but lacks all other virtues. In other words, what we call a nice fellow. He is temperate, just, but he doesn't have to be courageous and he doesn't have to be wise, like the members of the lowest class of Plato's Republic. This notion of goodness is developed very clearly in the Second Book of Cicero's Offices, for example in paragraph 35, and other examples. I did not know that when I wrote my book on Machiavelli, because Machiavelli makes a distinction between goodness and virtue, and I could not understand precisely what Machiavelli meant by that, and I had completely forgotten or never really understood these remarks in Cicero, and Cicero defines it. A good man is a man who has justice and temperance, ie., those qualities which the members of the lower classes in Plato's Republic have. And this notion of goodness we of course all understand, when we say very vaguely but rather definitely of a man, he is a good man, he is a nice fellow. We have in mind that he is just and temperate, but we do not include courage and wisdom. And that of course is not what Aristotle meant by a good man.

When the philosopher Aristotle addresses his political science to gentlemen, say to more or less perfect gentlemen, he shows to them as far as possible that the way of life of the perfect gentleman points to the philosophic life. He as it were removes the screen which these people themselves could not remove. He articulates for his addressees the unwritten nomos which was the limit of their vision, while he himself stands above that limit. He is thus compelled or enabled to correct the gentleman's opinions about the things which fall within their purview. The gentleman is by nature able to be affected by philosophy. Aristotle's political science is an attempt to actualize this potentiality. These people could become aware of something higher than gentlemanship, and to a certain extent and within the limits of the possibility, Aristotle does that. The gentleman affected by philosophy is in the highest case the enlightened statesman, like Pericles, who was affected by the philosopher Anaxagoras. The moral-political sphere is then not unqualifiedly closed to theoretical science. One reason why it seems necessary to make a radical distinction between practical wisdom, on the one hand, and the sciences and the arts on the other, was the fact that every art is concerned with a partial good, whereas prudence is concerned with the whole human good.

But now a surprise. The highest form of prudence is the legislative art, which is the architectonic art, as Aristotle calls it, the art of arts, because it deals with the whole human good in the most comprehensive manner. The art by which it is possible to teach legislators, this legislative art is concerned with the whole human good by being concerned with the highest human good, with reference to which all partial human goods are good. It deals with the subject in the most comprehensive manner because it establishes a framework within which political prudence proper, statesmanship, can take place. It is an art because unlike political prudence and prudence proper it is free from that involvement the dangers of which cannot be averted except by the moral virtues. Hence, prudence itself appears to be ultimately subject to an art, not to the vulgar arts, but to the art of arts, the legislative art. Considerations like these induced Socrates and Plato to assert that virtue is knowledge, and that prudence is philosophy. Because every prudence practiced by any individual requires for its full actualization a good society, good law, the work of the legislative art, so that prudence itself depends ultimately on an art which radically understood becomes philosophy. Just as the partial human goods cannot be known to be good

except with reference to the highest or the whole human good, the whole human good in its turn cannot be known except with reference to the good simply, what Plato calls the idea of the good, which comes to sight beyond and above all other ideas.

Let me restate that. The human good cannot be known, according to Plato, except with reference to the good simply, what he called the idea of the good. Hence the idea of the good is the principle from which all prudence and all prudential handling of situations must start. But alas, this highest theme of all wisdom, what Plato calls the idea of the good, is not quite obtainable. No full knowledge of the idea of the good is possible. Hence, wisdom is not possible, only love of wisdom, in Greek, philosophy. Hence, for the reason given, prudence is a never to be completed concern with one's own good. Now if this is so, how can it ever be known which way of life is the most choice-worthy life, in other words, does not this ultimate inadequacy of wisdom lead to complete practical skepticism? Plato or Socrates know that the philosophic life is the best life. The answer would be this, I believe. There is only one fundamental alternative regarding the good life, and that is the political-practical life or the life devoted to contemplation, the philosophic life. And now the contention is that the alternative, namely the political-practical life, is evidently subordinate to the philosophic life. Political life is evidently life in the cave, to use the Platonic likeness. The city we can also say is the only part of the whole whose essential character can be fully known. It can be fully understood that the political or practical life cannot fulfill man's highest possibility. This explains the difference between Plato and Aristotle. To remind you of the main point--there are a few other things which I would like to mention--the difficulty is this, for Plato it is clear, for Plato the distinction between prudence and theoretical wisdom is ultimately irrelevant, at least as far as we have seen hitherto, because prudence, or practical wisdom, has its principle in the idea of the good, the highest theme of theoretical understanding. The sphere of prudence is not closed as it is in Aristotle. It is only another expression to say for Plato there is no moral virtue, there is only vulgar or political virtue or philosophic or genuine virtue. This intermediate virtue does not exist. The difficulty is created by the fact that Aristotle regards wisdom, theoretical wisdom, prudence, and the arts as all available. There are artisans, obviously. No one questions that. There are prudent men, men of practical wisdom, including statesmen. There are wise men, there is at least Aristotle who has found a solution to the fundamental problems of the universe and of man. For Plato wisdom and prudence become ultimately inseparable and are not available in their perfection. So what you have is really philosophy as the theoretical-practical concern with your own improvement, with your own betterment, with your own virtue, an attempt which can never cease because wisdom is in fact not available. The difficulty in Aristotle himself is this, that Aristotle must in a way admit that while prudence is superior to the arts, there is one art, the highest art, which is superior to prudence, the architectonic art, the legislative art. And this is a kind of necessary concession to the Platonic point of view.

One can make many objections to what I have said, and perfectly justified objections. I will mention only one point. According to this scheme it would seem that the philosopher is identical with the statesman of the highest order. If there is no fundamental distinction between theory and practice the highest theoretical activity and the highest practical activity must coincide. At the

beginning of the dialogue Sophist someone, not Socrates, asserts that the philosopher and the statesman are two entirely different human types. He says there are three human types, the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Plato wrote a dialogue called the Sophist in which he made clear what the sophist is, and then he wrote a dialogue called the Statesman in which the speaker, the stranger from Elea, made clear what the statesman is, but he did not write the dialogue the Philosopher. So either he died before he could write it or he thought that by understanding the sophist and the statesman we understand the philosopher. That leads to very hard questions into which I cannot go. What I am driving at is that these are only very provisional statements, but I believe one has to consider these points if one wants to go deeper with the argument.

Q: In what sense is the legislative art an art and not merely the highest exercise of prudence?

A: You mean what the legislator here and now does?

Q: I take it you use legislative art in a fundamental sense.

A: No, I don't mean to speak of legislators in the sense of congressmen or senators. I mean the man who goes out to found a colony and gives a code to that. Is that what you mean?

Q: Yes. Why isn't that an exercise of political wisdom?

A: But is he not guided by a higher art? Let us take another example, a general, a first-rate general. He wins a battle. But what does that mean? That is a prudential action, considering his situation, the position of the enemy. But is this also not an application of his art, perhaps a very ingenious application? But is there not a strategic art which can be taught? Not to everyone. No art can be taught to everyone, unless it is a very simple art like——

Q: Would you say that a knowledge of human nature is necessary in order to exercise the legislative art and that the practicioner of political wisdom must look to the legislative art for this knowledge of human nature in order to perform—

A: The statesman is dependent on the legislator. That is a very simple thing. Any President of the United States is dependent for all his doings on the Constitution. He can have a certain leeway there, but ultimately he cannot rise higher than his source.

Q: My question was in what sense are the founders practicioners of legislative art rather than practicioners of political wisdom.

A: Let us speak of statesmanship and the legislative art on a theoretical level. The statesman is a man who handles individual political situations, here and now. The legislator in the old sense is the man who establishes the framework, what we now would call the constitution, but the ancients also meant the specific laws, regarding marriage, property, and so on. This is all prudence, because the legislator gives the law for this community,

here and now. The highest form of prudence, the legislative acts of the highest order, is itself dependent on an art, the architectonic art, the legislative art. Have you ever looked at Plato's Laws? The over-all impression is that here is a man, a philosopher, who is the teacher of the legislative art, teaches that art to actual philosophers. This means in the first place that higher than all forms of prudence including the highest there is an art.

Q: That art would seem to be wisdom.

A: Not quite, because it has to do ultimately with producing something, namely the good social order. But precisely this follows, and take for example Plato's Laws, that the teacher of legislators cannot do his job if he does not know the highest principles, that with which the theoretical man is concerned. In a word, the teacher of legislators is a philosopher. In Plato that is very clear. That is what he means by the words virtue is knowledge. If you think through what everyone means by virtue in everyday life, in the most practical sense, you ultimately are driven back to understanding, insight, theoretical understanding of a sort. Aristotle denies that. Aristotle says that a practical science is possible, or as I put it, that the sphere of prudence is in principle closed. That is what he in the main conveys through his two works, the Ethics and the Politics. But even there, in Aristotle, this is not unqualifiedly true. In other words Aristotle makes theoretical science as independent of practical science as is feasible.

Q: But in Aristotle's point of view, the political scientist or the man of political wisdom must look to a legislative art in the same sense?

A: Ultimately yes. When the statesman in what we would now call a constitutional or limited government has to consider and to obey an order which he did not establish. To that extent he looks up to something and the quality of his looking up will depend on his understanding the intention of the legislator. But the legislator himself is in fact the practicioner of an art in all cases, Socrates would say, a man who exercises an art while being clearly prudent because he teaches the legislative art. Do you see the point? ... would say that...exercised the legislative art by laying down the law for Sparta...the man who has learned the true legislative art, that he would say no, he didn't. He did as well as he could. He was an apprentice, and already compelled to produce a shoe fitting Sparta, and the work was what one would expect from an apprentice.

Q: In the last thing with which you were concerned in your argument, you said that for Plato prudence led to something higher, a legislative art which would in turn lead to something higher which is the truth, while Aristotle wants to—

A: A ceiling, Aristotle wants to have a ceiling. We could think of the sphere of prudence that way. It is closed, and the ceiling is constituted by the moral virtues, by the ends of the gentleman.

Q: But you were arguing that even with the ceiling, Aristotle was aware that in a larger sense prudence also has a knowledge of the natural ends of man.

A: You can say that. What I was trying to do was slightly more subtle. First to bring out as sharp as I could that this is what Aristotle really does over-all

and then to indicate that here and there Aristotle is compelled to question the closedness of the sphere of prudence. But that does not do away with the fact that for most practical purposes it works, and that this is an important lesson for us, especially today where all the pressure is to make political science dependent on theoretical sciences of a kind Aristotle didn't know of and of a kind of theoretical sciences which make a true understanding of political things altogether impossible. That is our special handicap today, namely a science modelled on the natural science modern style which suffers from this fundamental handicap. That, you can say, is the motive behind my insisting. Yes?

Q:...if art derives its justification from prudence, and the sphere of prudence ultimately derives its justification from wisdom, how do we know that philosophy is self-contained, that philosophy may not need something higher than itself to justify itself? How do we know that philosophy is really self-contained?

A: That is only the inner evidence of what philosophy says can answer that question. There cannot be a regress in the infinite, otherwise absolute skepticism, theoretical and practical, follows. Sure, you could say absolute skepticism is in order. Then we would have to discuss it.

Q: In other words, we have to accept it on faith?

A: No, that is the end of philosophy, because philosophy needs to be the quest for evident knowledge. And if the quest for evident knowledge is itself based on something alien—but let us leave it now at your more radical statement, absolute skeptticism would follow from that. All right, the only practical and honest way to go about it is to look at absolute skepticism and see whether that is a feasible position. That's an indirect proof as it were for Aristotle, as I believe it would be.

Q: If you accept as the highest art the legislative art in the fundamental sense, ie., the ability to form a social order—

A: No, it is an art, not a science, because it is concerned with production. An art is concerned with production. The shoemaker's art is concerned with the production of shoes, the legislator's art with the production of laws or other social institutions, whereas the theoretical sciences are not concerned with production but only with seeing things as they are.

Q: If we accept this analysis, and then take into consideration this highest art as practiced by the founders of the Constitution of the United States, how does this tie in with Aristotle's notion of change with regard to the laws, because granting...has to formulate a ratio between condition and —

A: That is an important but theoretically very secondary question. Namely, once such a social order is established, the rule is to preserve it and not to have frequent and especially radical changes.

Q: What about the more fundamental question, which is the actual establishment of a better social order?

A: Oh, very simple. I use now the Platonic symbolism, but you have to translate it into more reasonable language. Let us assume the good order is that of the

Republic. Now what the legislator does, he will see that it is absolutely impossible to get people to accept it, people for whom he has to legislate. He says I will make a concession. In the first place, let them have private property and private families, concessions from the point of view of the letter of the Republic. And furthermore these people come from Sparta or from Crete, they have these and these particular habits. Some of them are nice, others of them are not so nice, but I cannot simply legislate away the not so nice habits. What will I do? I will strike a compromise, I will restrain these bad habits they have, I will not try to eradicate them. That is a subordinate but important question.

Now, I am sorry, but because this is the last meeting, I must add two points. I have of course forgotten or neglected things occurring in the Politics which deserve consideration. I would like to turn your attention, and without any thought of the examination, I could almost swear that these two points will not occur in the examination, so no mercenary considerations... At the beginning of Book Four is the most elaborate statement of Aristotle on the political art or science, and we should read that carefully. It is also interesting with a view to the question we discussed today, do we find at the top a form of prudence or an art. Very important for this question. The other point to which I draw your attention is this in Book Four, 1297b37ff. Aristotle makes a distinction between three parts of government, the deliberative, the magistrative, and the judicial. Now this is the root in a way of the most obvious characteristic of the United States Constitution, you know, a legislature, an executive, a judiciary. But all the more important is it to see the difference. Aristotle speaks of the deliberative, not of the legislative, ie., such things as war and peace, and treaties, belong under deliberative and are clearly excluded from the legislative. What is the idea underlying the narrowing of the deliberative to legislature? I believe one can say that all governmental functions, including the actions of the prerogative...Locke...are to be subject to law in one way or the other. The second point which one has to consider is that the distinction between these three parts of government is not separation of power. Aristotle is perfectly open to the notion that all three powers might be exercised by the same part, by the same people, not separation of power. And if one wants to understand the crucial difference between Aristotle and the discussion of the Constitution, one has to go back to the theoretical view, in this case the 11th Book in Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws. There Montesquieu makes clear why we need separation of power. And the answer is, and that is very revealing, the security of the individual. This consideration is not as such crucial in Aristotle. He was aware of it somehow, but not as such. Here we see the connection between Montesquieu and the self-preservation, natural right teachers Locke and Hobbes before him. In this connection I would like to mention here there is an immediate source of Montesquieu's discussion of the English constitution in Book 11 is the discussion by Polybius in the Sixth Book of his History of the Roman Constitution. And that is also very interesting. The Roman constitution had a kind of separation of powers. Some things are done by the people, others are done by the senate, and others are done by the counsels, the executives, you could say. But if you compare Polybius's presentation of the Roman constitution with Montesquieu's discussion of the English constitution you see there is a very important theoretical difference. Both are concerned with freedom, Polybius as well as Montesquieu. But Polybius believes he can get this freedom by a division of the sum-total of governmental powers into different parts without a principle guiding the division. As it were, you take

three chunks, divide into three chunks, with one chunk to this part, but no principle. In the case of Montesquieu there is a principle: executive, legislative, judiciary. But the discussion of this problem must start, and cannot start anywhere else except from this passage in Aristotle where you have the beginning, namely a distinction of governmental powers, as distinguished from a separation of powers.

Now a last word about the purpose of this course. What I wanted to do in this course was to make clear those fundamental concepts of classical political philosophy, especially of Aristotle, and these fundamental concepts were the city, the regime, and the best regime. And to make clear these fundamental concepts means to make clear what these concepts imply. If I can venture to draw any conclusion from this discussion, and at that I leave it, it is this: the key concept of political science in Aristotle is the concept of the regime. Aristotle's doctrine of the regime becomes specific by his distinction of the six regimes, the three good and the three bad ones, and the various important sub-divisions of them, especially of democracy and oligarchy. But the Aristotelian analysis of regimes is not immediately applicable in the details to the analysis of any modern regime because there is a fundamental difference between all modern political life, especially in our age, between all present day regimes and the regimes considered by Aristotle. And if we trace this difference back to its principle we come back to this point, that modern thought understands differently than Aristotle the relation between the demos and philosophy or science. The modern understanding of the relation between philosophy and science and the demos leads to two different but connected consequences, (a) technology and (b) ideologies. The characteristic of present day regimes is that they are regimes in technological societies and in societies possessing ideologies. Without well considering it we cannot understand any isms of our time. But that doesn't do away with the fact that the concept of the regime, as the order of society defined in terms of its end and of the human beings akin to that end, and therefore ruling in broad daylight, still is the best clue we have to the analysis of political phenomena. This was my over-all intention in this course. Now I am willing to have a brief discussion of about ten more minutes because at an earlier time I was perceiving that there was an urge on the part of some of you. Yes?

Q: ...It seems to me from what you have said that there's a possibility that there are going to be two advantages to man, the one being theoretical knowledge and the other being the virtues.

A: Say moral virtues, because Aristotle also speaks of intellectual virtues.

Q: But in this way you could have a body of good men...why virtue is good, and you could have a group of immoral philosophers.

A: Not immoral. If you would say trans-moral, trans-moral would be better, because their motivation in their actions would not be moral proper. That you can say. That is exactly the point. Aristotle tries to solve it by showing how in gentlemanship as gentlemanship there lies a possibility of being open to philosophy, of being affected by philosophy. That is the solution which he suggests. And if this is so, there would be a kind of harmony between philosophy and the polis, mediated by the gentleman.

Q: In evaluating the regimes are we to look to the greatest excellence of a particular man or to a general good quality of life that pervades a large number of men? I've had some difficulty trying to decide in my own mind which of these is superior for Aristotle.

A: Aristotle would of course think that there is a ruling stratum. That is an extreme case, of an early monarchy where there would be one absolutely outstanding man. That would not apply to anything later. There would be a considerable part of the population not necessarily in the majority, who would be in this sense good. But Aristotle would I think take it for granted that if you take goodness, gentlemanship, in any way seriously, then it will be only a part of the population, say only a minority of the population, can actually have it. But the others can have a deference to it which makes them in their way good men. But they would not be good in themselves, they would be good through deference.

Q: The problem I had in particular was in striking the line between the number who are deferent to this good quality of life and those who actually possess it, who were not deferring to virtue but had actually attained a certain level—

A: If I may clarify that with a wholly arbitrary numerical statement, say 30% of gentlemen, 50% truly deferent, 20% compelled by the 80% to behave, to give you just an inkling of what I believe he meant.

Q: Could you characterize this difference which you have shown here as the classical theoretical being trans-moral, the modern theoretical, the difference as beyond good and evil?

A: Beyond good and evil, no. You mean, what would Machiavelli's position be?

Q: Yes, I'm trying to think what would be in his sense value-free. What I am trying to ask is about the step from trans-moral to immoral, isn't this the step that has been made?

A: What would be a legitimate characterization of modern social science, not of the individuals, they are in addition human beings and citizens, but in their capacity as social scientists, well I think you would have to say simply amoral. That has to do with the fact what are the objects of the theoretical attitude. For Aristotle it goes without saying that the objects of the theoretical attitude have an order, or to use a term which is not identical with what we mean by moral but it is surely also not amoral, beauty, resplendence, inner beauty. I will give you an example. When you take a logical positivist and his chief concern is science, meaning not what is science for but what is scientific method and his procedure, and so on, he makes a value judgment without admitting, meaning he does not know that this analysis of science, a strictly descriptive analysis of science, is in fact normative. It excludes pseudo-science as a matter of course, alchemy, astrology, or what have you. Now you must take a further step. There are such philosophical disciplines as ethics, or aesthetics, for example. They deal with genuine morality, ethics, as distinguished from a fake morality, and aesthetics is concerned with a true work of art, in contra-distinction to trash. So these are all necessarily in a way normative pursuits. Philosophy which is concerned with normative subjects, with values, cannot be "amoral" in the sense in which social science is amoral. We had an example on an earlier occasion when I spoke of positivism, for example, culture, as a

subject of anthropology. That cannot be clarified by anthropology itself. You have to call in philosophy sooner or later to make clear what culture is. Now if you say that culture is a society, understood as engaged in a variety of different but related pursuits such as the law, food production, religion, art, and what not, and all these things are understood here in a strictly value-free manner, in other words, they are not in the guiding light of some norm, that is wholly absent from Aristotle, I should say from any earlier philosophy. I mean even the materialist doctrines of older times were not free from that. I believe there is no precedent for that. A study claiming to lead to knowledge which is value free, that is the motive here. I mean there were skeptics, but they didn't claim they had any science. Today the modern social scientist is not a skeptic of course. He claims to be a man of science, a man who finds knowledge, he admits the possibility of knowledge and yet says that within the sphere of knowledge no distinction between high and low is possible in any sense. That I believe has no precedent. Skepticism has plenty of precedents, but then skepticism meant that no science is possible. And you must also not forget that from Aristotle's point of view, and as well from Plato's point of view where it was clearer, that if one can say of philosophy that it is trans-moral, then one must say that within the purview of non-philosophic man, what we call morality, say justice, is in the ordinary sense of the word still the highest, there is no question about it. You must go beyond that, beyond justice as it is ordinarily understood (in the world ?) according to Plato, because it is always defective understanding which is frozen for the sake of social stability. Therefore you must go beyond it. But it is surely higher than anything else with which people are concerned, satisfaction of bodily needs and so on. Trans-moral is not amoral.

Q: I cannot see why self-preservation of the social order once it is in motion is self-evident, that is I don't see why justice has to be frozen in order to keep social stability. I think that this would be the height of injustice.

A: Well, Plato says that every just thing, whether a just man or a just law or just institution, is imperfectly just, ie., there is always some injustice in it. Let me try to make explicit what you imply. You have a society of imperfect individuals, of imperfect laws. And then you say, we will change this, perhaps not at one stroke, but step by step, in the direction of perfect justice. That is the notion, the modern notion of progress, but it presupposes a lot of things. It presupposes that the change and the movement that goes with the change will be in the right direction. I will give you an example from a different field. I once had a friend who was a legal realist, if you know what that is. He was a very intelligent man but given to (strange formulations ?)...and he simply...what does the law mean, nothing but what the judge makes of it. And of course the same thing applied to the Constitution. I tried to make clear to him that he was a liberal in the present day sense of the word. I said that is very good from your point of view as long as you can be sure that the judges are more liberal than the legislators, but if, God forbid from your point of view, a situation would arise where the judges are reactionaries, then your only hope would be that the judges are bound by the relative liberalism of the laws laid down by the legislature. The modern view—this sanguine character, we rise up to the heights of justice—presupposes that on the whole the change is in the right direction, but if we do not know that, if we must reckon with the possibility that the change might as well have a tendency in the wrong direction, then, would say if you

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have an order which is tolerably decent, which means, at best, quite a few injustices, then it is better to preserve it than to take chances by changes which might go, either directly or indirectly, in the opposite direction. In other words, the difference is not incidentally a different estimate of impersonal forces, as we would say, whether the stars or the economic conditions, it doesn't make any difference, fight for the good cause or do not fight for the good cause. I think that what has happened in the last thirty or fourty years, and that is underlying much of the troubles in social science, is an increasing awareness of these extra-human supports, you know, the circumstances, are not so reliable as in the nineteenth century many people believed, partly on the basis of general evolutionism, development from the amoeba to man, and from man will go still higher, or other theories of this kind. Surely one cannot dogmatically establish it because Aristotle says it. That doesn't make it true. That we know. But one must take Aristotle because his is truly a work about man, as an occasion for making clear why did he have to use terms strange to us, what are the principles, and see or discover the tacit assumptions which we make...and then weigh the terms which survive this view.

Q: But doesn't justice contain two things, not only distribution but doing what is right?

A: But what does that mean? If you go to the South, in entirely pre-integration areas, which partly exists as far as I know, you act wrong if you go into a part reserved for colored people. You are a nice man and a man who does right, and therefore you abet by your action segregation. I assume now, for argument's sake, that the anti-segregation case is good. To act right means in all cases crudely to obey the law. The disobedience to the law which is in a higher sense justified is always a rare and an extreme case. A decent Southerner believing in segregation would of course not for one moment do wrong to a Negro, meaning robbing him, and other things. He would only obey the law. And yet according to the liberal view he does wrong by obeying the law and by not very actively working for their change.

Q: But isn't then justice just relative if just used to support society, the social order that exists?

A: Primarily...you must not forget there is always a sphere where the law is silent and where justice in a more subtle sense comes in as a matter of course. May I mention one example? In the experiences of justice which are most common to people like myself, to be fair to students. This is not always easy you know. (Virtue ?) draws a line between a B- and a C+. But if we are not pedantic and morbid, we will say, well, we know there is an element of arbitrariness which cannot be eliminated. This I do not mean. But if it comes to a question of what we are supposed to do in the classroom, what our substantive justice is, other things we can say are a matter of course, great divergencies of opinion appear. Everyone would say he is doing right in a formal sense, but the substantive thing (he can't judge ?). If a man who is very competent in his field, and can go to a classroom, and thought on the way from his office to the classroom about the subject of his lecture, and is really competent in his field, talks for fifty minutes or a hundred minutes without stopping, without reconsidering what he said last year in his course, is this a conscientious teacher? Does he do right by his students? That is more subtle.